

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 04377 210530Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 HA-05 /078 W
-----067927 210533Z /17

R 201229Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0321
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONCUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSU MADRAS

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, IN, PK
SUBJECT: INDIAN REACTION TO BHUTTO VERDICT

1. THE LAHORE COURT'S VERDICT AND SENTENCE ON FORMER PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO RECEIVED FRONT-PAGE TREATMENT OVER THE WEEK-END IN THE NEW DELHI PRESS. EDITORIAL REACTION HAS BEEN MILD, WITH ONLY THREE PAPERS COMMENTING THUS FAR, MOSTLY TO SPECULATE WHETHER THE SENTENCE WILL BE CARRIED OUT. THE "PATRIOT" NOTES THAT A "NUMBER OF ISLAMIC POWERS WHOSE FRIENDSHIP ISLAMABAD DESPERATELY NEEDS" HAVE BEEN URGING CMLA ZIA TO REACH A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT WITH BHUTTO TO AVOID CIVIL WAR; THE "TIMES OF INDIA" MENTIONS SAUDI ARABIA, IRAN AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AS THE ISLAMIC POWERS IN QUESTION. NONE OF THE EDITORIALS WAS WILLING TO SPECULATE ON BHUTTO'S POLITICAL FUTURE.

2. MEMBERS OF THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY EXPRESSED "SHOCK" AT THE VERDICT OVER THE WEEKEND. THEIR
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CONCERN, AND REPORTS OF A PRO-BHUTTO DEMONSTRATION IN SRINAGAR FEATURING ANTI-GEN. ZIA AND ANTI-US SLOGANS, RECEIVED LIMITED INSIDE-PAGE PRESS COVERAGE.

3. THE GOI HAS, OF COURSE, SAID NOTHING PUBLICLY ON THE JUDGEMENT. THE DEATH PENALTY IMPOSED BY THE LAHORE HIGH COURT HAS DOUBTLESS SURPRISED MEA. ITS JOINT SECRETARY FOR

PAKISTAN TOLD THE NEW DELHI AND ISLAMABAD POL COUNSELORS LAST WEEK THAT HE EXPECTED A RELATIVELY LIGHT SENTENCE. THE SAME OFFICIAL ALSO TOLD US THAT HE FEARED THE POSSIBILITY OF POLITICAL REFUGEES FROM THE BHUTTO CAMP SEEKING AT LEAST TRANSITORY ASYLUM IN INDIA IN THE EVENT OF A HARSH CRACKDOWN AGAINST THE FORMER PM'S SUPPORTERS. PRESS COMMENTARY ABOUT PAKISTAN DEVELOPMENTS HAS NOT TO OUR KNOWLEDGE REFLECTED THIS APPARENT APPREHENSION.
GOHEEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, GPVERNMENT REACTIONS, COURT DECISIONS, POLITICAL PRISONERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978NEWDE04377
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780123-1053
Format: TEL
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780347/aaaabntg.tel
Line Count: 71
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3f46f2c3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3268805
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INDIAN REACTION TO BHUTTO VERDICT
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SHUM, IN, PK, (BHUTTO, ZULFIKAR ALI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3f46f2c3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014